

ONTARIO'S GREAT LAKES CAN'T BE BEAT

Ontario's Great Lakes can't be beat for the excitement of landing a monster rainbow trout or salmon. But that's not all they offer. Every type of fishing — deep water to shoreline — and just about every type of North American freshwater sport fish — notably lake trout, walleye, salmon, rainbow and perch — are to be found in these vast waters.

The Great Lakes — Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario — were an awesome sight for the first Europeans who arrived here 400 years ago. Never before had anyone seen bodies of fresh water that approached the size and depth of these "inland seas". The seemingly endless bounty of fish they contained was just as impressive — quick to become a main staple of diet for the early explorers and the settlers to follow.

Today, Ontario's Great Lakes are still rich with fish. It's true that pollution, overfishing and the predatory sea lamprey took their toll earlier in this century. But restocking programs, lamprey control, restrictions on pollutants, and more modern fishing regulations have made possible a tremendous comeback in the numbers and varieties of fish. Both sport and commercial fishing are thriving again.

Most fish species in these lakes are in season year-round and the fishing is at its peak from late spring to mid-fall. Some bays — especially on Lake Erie and Georgian Bay — offer good ice-fishing from January to March.

Each of the Great Lakes has its own special appeal. The pristine beauty, miles of untouched wilderness shoreline, and cold, deep, clean waters of Lake Superior make it a fisherman's dream. This "jewel" of the Great Lakes has the largest population of native lake trout stock in Ontario — a fish prized both as a trophy and for its good eating. The fish here grow to tremendous sizes. The record laker catch for Ontario came out of Lake Superior — a whopping 63 pounds, two ounces, measuring over four feet in length.



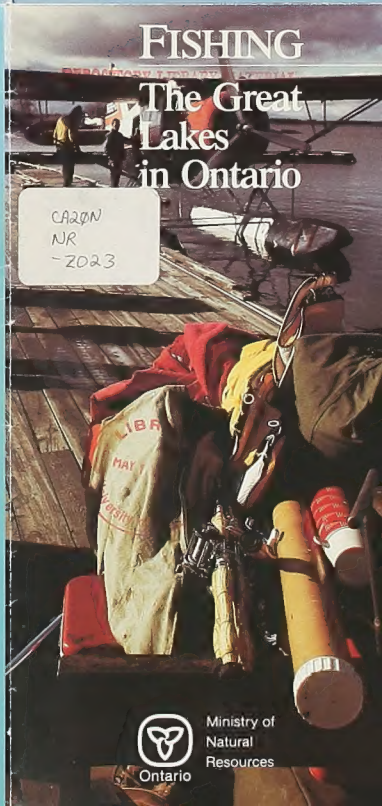
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The summer months find the lake trout deep down in the cooler waters. This necessitates deep water trolling with downrigger equipment and the latest in sonar graphs and temperature gauges. But in spring and fall the lake trout are closer to the surface, and closer to shore. Fishing offshore, or in small boats in shallow bays and river mouths, is possible at these times of the year — as long as elementary caution is exercised.

Along the north shore of Lake Superior — especially where major rivers like the Nipigon, Big Pic, Michipicoten, Montreal and White River enter the lake — are found some of the biggest brook trout in North America. Many of these fish — known as coasters — go up to trophy sizes of nine to 12 pounds. Good sized rainbow trout can also be found along the north shore.

Pink salmon have become a well-established catch in Lake Superior. They are readily available in the fall, from Thunder Bay to Sault Ste. Marie, when they make their way back to the rivers to spawn.

At Sault Ste. Marie the waters of Lake Superior flow through the St. Mary's River into Lake Huron. This lake offers the greatest variety of fishing, and fish species, of all the Great Lakes.

The small bays of Lake Huron's North Channel, above Manitowish Island, provide excellent fishing for walleye, pike and muskie, but jumbo perch are also highly-prized here. In fact, the perch fishing is so easy that it's one of the few areas in Ontario with a limit on the number of perch caught — only 50 allowed per day!

Lake Huron has always offered good shore fishing, especially around river mouths, but it is becoming increasingly popular for open water fishing. The new high-tech, deep water equipment is opening up this lake to more and more sport fishermen every year. The southern Lake Huron basin around Goderich, Port Elgin and Southampton is seeing the beginning of a new salmon fishery and a resurgence of charter boat angling.

One of the most popular areas in the province for good fishing is the "sixth" great lake — Georgian Bay. Although it is actually part of Lake Huron, Georgian Bay can really be considered a lake in its own right. Its thousands of small islands, rocky shoals and clear, clean water create an environment conducive to a healthy and thriving fish population. This is the place to go for hybrid lake trout, perch, muskie, rainbows, walleye, bass, panfish, crappies, pike, carp — just about any fish available in Ontario.

The finest rainbow fishing in the Great Lakes is found in the southern end of Georgian Bay, from Owen Sound to Wassaga Beach. The Ontario record for this fish — 29 pounds, two ounces — was caught at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River in May 1975. The Owen Sound area is also exceptional for hybrid lake trout.

Good walleye fishing can be found in the spring and early summer along the eastern coast of Georgian Bay around Moon River, off Waubesaushene, and from the mouth of the Key River to the French River area. Considered by many to be Ontario's prime game fish, the walleye is also delectable eating — especially when panfried as a shore lunch. The largest member of the perch family, the walleye averages one to three pounds but goes right up to over 20 pounds. These fish travel in schools so if one strikes, you can usually count on more.

Over in the southeastern corner of the Bay, around Honey Harbour and Beausoleil Island, you'll find crappies and channel catfish, both fine eating fish. This is also a well-known area for good-sized whitefish.

Lurking in the weedy bays is Ontario's most respected fighting fish, the muskie. Famous for its size, strength and stamina, this exciting sport fish is right at home in the shallow bays of Georgian Bay's eastern shore — around Honey Harbour, Moon River and Sans Souci. The French River area, in the northeast part of the Bay, is considered the best location to try for record size muskies.



Lake Erie is the most southerly and the most productive of the Great Lakes. Its productivity is largely due to shallower waters which produce an abundant food supply for a wide variety of fish. The big bays and marshy shorelines — especially around Rondeau and Long Point — offer excellent perch and bass fishing, and the lake is renowned for its perch fishing both summer and winter.

Turkey Point is one of the best places to fish for pike. Rainbow trout can be found around the mouths of streams and rivers from Long Point east towards Niagara Falls. Long Point Bay is another good fishing spot, noted for its smallmouth bass, perch and pike.

The once plentiful walleye have made an amazing comeback in Lake Erie after a period of serious depletion. They are now found in good numbers in the western basin of Lake Erie — especially south of Pelee Island — and are spreading their territory eastward.

In the spring there is the annual three-week smelt run, usually during the last three weeks of April. The sandy beaches up and down Lake Erie come alive at night as eager smelt fishers line the shores scooping up literally thousands of these tasty little fish.



Separated from Lake Erie by Niagara Falls, Lake Ontario is becoming a popular fishing destination because of its easy access and resurging fish population. Intensive stocking programs are working toward restoring this lake to a highly productive fishery. The western basin between Toronto and the Niagara River is really booming with Pacific salmon and rainbow trout. And the lake trout are coming back.

Charter boats — fully equipped with graph-sonar and downriggers — are available from Toronto right around to St. Catharines. This is the best way to fish for deep water species like coho, chinook, rainbows and lake trout, from mid-summer through to mid-fall. It's not unusual to land a 20-pound lake trout or chinook, and you're almost guaranteed that a day's outing will produce some pretty impressive fish — eight pounds and up.

At the eastern end of Lake Ontario, the Bay of Quinte area and the Thousand Islands just east of Kingston, offer walleye, muskie, yellow perch, carp, catfish and a variety of panfish. West of Kingston, shoreline fishing for rainbows is really picking up all the way to Toronto.

The Great Lakes have the potential to once again generate the rich fish bounty that so amazed the early explorers. The lakes still have an exceptionally abundant forage base — necessary both to support the enormous variety of fish as well as to produce the big sizes. Intensive stocking programs by both Ontario and the neighbouring states are increasing the numbers of fish, but it is the lakes themselves that nurture and fatten the fish.

Ontario's fisheries management goal in the Great Lakes is to revive the native fish species that once thrived here. This goal of natural reproduction is being accomplished by stocking programs, as well as by improving spawning beds, creating nursery areas, protecting the fish during spawning time, cleaning up the waters and preventing contamination.

Fishermen can play their part. Be aware of Ontario's fishing regulations, don't overfish, and be careful not to create pollution. Remember there are limits on the number of fish that may be caught and kept each day (see the fishing regulations summary). Help out the Ontario conservation officers by reporting any incidents you see of illegal fishing or the polluting of lake waters.

Carefully handle any fish you are putting back. Release the fish as quickly as possible, and if deeply hooked, cut the line and leave the hook in.

DON'T FORGET... some Great Lakes fish are still contaminated and have certain guidelines for consumption. These guidelines are clearly spelled out in a publication from the Ontario government called "Guide to Eating Sport Fish in Ontario". The booklet is available free of charge from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Northern Affairs.

A CAUTIONARY REMINDER:

Storms can come up quickly on all the Great Lakes. Don't go far from shore in a small boat and **always** check the marine forecast before going out. The water temperatures in the Great Lakes, except for Lake Erie, are always very low so be aware of how to treat hypothermia. Make sure there are lifejackets or personal flotation devices for everyone aboard, and if you fall overboard remain with your boat. There is a common misconception that alcohol will warm you up, but in fact it has the opposite effect and can prove harmful.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on fishing regulations, charter boats, and where to fish, write to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Fisheries Information Branch, First Floor, Whitney Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3, or telephone (416) 965-7883.

For advice on where to stay and how to get there, call the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation toll free: from Canada (except Yukon and N.W.T.)... 1-800-268-3735; from New York State... 1-800-462-8404; from continental U.S.A.... 1-800-828-8585.

